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New York

President:	Mr. Allen	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Lie Cheng
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Mr. Mielus
	Russian Federation	Mr. Repkin
	Sweden	Mr. Vaverka
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

The situation in Burundi

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Burundi

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Burundi to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite President Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to President Kafando.

Mr. Kafando (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to again brief the Security Council on the situation in Burundi. I would also like to commend all the other members of the Council for their ongoing commitment to international peace.

On 7 June, following the constitutional referendum of 17 May, the Head of State of Burundi, President Pierre Nkurunziza, solemnly promulgated the new Constitution adopted by more than 73 per cent of the Burundian people. On the same occasion, he officially announced the end of his mandate in 2020 and his commitment to giving his full support to the new President to be elected. In our efforts to help this brotherly country to definitively settle the crisis, those are two major acts whose importance we should underline and which provide us with an opportunity to move forward in resolving the Burundian situation once and for all.

In particular, we believe that the Government and the Burundian political class should jointly take the opportunity of that new dynamic to work to create a new political environment conducive to strengthening national unity and peace. The political leaders' dialogue workshop, held on 3 August in Kayanza, in the Republic of Burundi, at the initiative of the Minister of the Interior, which resulted in the adoption of a road map for the 2020 elections, is part of that rationale and deserves our encouragement. Moreover, the Government should take that initiative into account in the context of the intra-Burundian dialogue to ensure the greatest possible participation by all stakeholders.

Since my previous briefing, on 24 May (see S/PV.8268), I visited the subregion as part of my mandate, in particular to meet the facilitator, President Benjamin Mkapa, in Dar es Salaam and the mediator, President Yoweri Museveni, in Kampala. I handed the mediator a written message from the Secretary-General and a memorandum containing specific proposals on both the dialogue process and the initiatives that certain guarantors of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement should undertake in order to reaffirm the paramount importance of that historic Agreement, which, as we know, represents the foundation for peace in that part of the African continent.

At the end of the discussions, the mediator and the facilitator reaffirmed to me their full commitment to relaunching the dialogue as soon as possible. In particular, the mediator committed to organizing an extraordinary summit of the East African Community on the subject. With regard to the same concerns, I am hoping to visit Burundi in October so as to undertake a certain number of activities and, of course, to commence talks with the Burundian authorities to see how we can pursue the process, alongside the facilitator and the mediator.

During recent briefings on this issue, the Council has been informed of the steady improvement of the security situation in Burundi. The situation has remained calm since the constitutional referendum, notwithstanding several challenges on the part of the opposition. There is therefore reason to commend the efforts of the Government and encourage it to remain vigilant.

Similarly, with regard to the humanitarian situation, we must commend the efforts of Burundi and Tanzania, which, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, since September 2017 have allowed the voluntary repatriation of approximately 35,000 Burundi refugees. Those efforts must continue to be pursued in accordance with the principle of voluntary repatriation, while ensuring the return and reintegration of returnees in host communities with respect and dignity.

In terms of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, a number of high-level delegations from countries

and international organizations have visited Burundi recently. I note, among others, the delegations of the African Parliamentary Union, the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association, the Forum of Parliaments of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the International Organization of la Francophonie. Today, as we speak, Bujumbura is welcoming the Women's Forum for Peace and Security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Subregion, organized under the auspices of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

I truly believe that such visits undoubtedly reflect the will of the Government of Burundi to improve its relations with the international community. On that basis, and taking advantage of the de-escalation, it is to be enthusiastically hoped that Burundi and the European Union will soon resume talks with a view to resuming their cooperation. We are encouraging them — I was even going to say that we are pushing them — to that end, as we believe that sanctions are not always the ideal solution. I also call on the Burundian authorities to finalize discussions on the memorandum of understanding with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Burundi and finally agree to sign the headquarters agreement to allow my office in Bujumbura to operate properly and in better conditions.

My final request is that the Council reiterate its appeal to all actors in the Burundian crisis to participate sincerely and in good faith in the upcoming dialogue, which will be the fifth and probably the last of its kind, with the mediator, the facilitator and the African Union, which we are undertaking to convene in the very near future either in Entebbe or Arusha. Needless to say, the road map is already in place, the programme has been laid out and the Council would do well to launch an appeal so that this time we can make the long-sought dialogue a success.

The President: I thank Mr. Kafando for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank President Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, for his briefing. I thank him especially for his work on this important dossier while the situation remains volatile in a country that has been deeply and negatively affected by the electoral tensions of 2015, which created an environment of distrust among political actors that unfortunately continues to this day.

The persistent political stalemate and the human rights situation in Burundi remain a source of deep concern for France. Faced with the lack of real, inclusive dialogue and the closing of political space, the most radical opposition factions are tempted by armed struggle. The heavy presence and role of members of the Imbonerakure militia in carrying out measures of intimidation and suppressing opposing views are increasing. As Ambassador Delattre underscored in May (see S/PV.8268), the risk of the situation deteriorating cannot be ruled out, as was shown by the killing of three soldiers — victims of an ambush — near Bujumbura this past weekend. As we know, the status quo is unsustainable. The situation is a source of instability for the entire region. Reports of clashes on Congolese territory fuelled by Burundian armed groups are illustrative of the latter.

On behalf of France, I would like to take advantage of the presence of the Permanent Representative of Burundi today to appeal to the Burundian authorities in the same spirit as President Kafando just now. It is essential to complete the pacification of the country and ensure the security of all against every form violence, regardless of its source. It is urgent to combat impunity, including within the ranks of the security forces. It is necessary to engage unconditionally in an inclusive dialogue with all sectors of Burundian society, especially with those who do not share the same political convictions. Lastly, it is crucial, in the national interest, to restore respect for fundamental freedoms, including freedom of opinion and of the media. The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, which is the cornerstone of peace, as Mr. Kafando just pointed out, provides the appropriate framework for that reconciliation. It must be preserved at all costs.

President Nkurunziza's announcement that he will not run in the 2020 elections is a positive development that France welcomes. We hope that it will facilitate the search for a lasting political solution to the crisis experienced by Burundi. In that context, I hope that an inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue can be undertaken, in the spirit of unification and peaceful coexistence established by the Arusha Agreement, with the support of the mediation of the countries of the East African Community so as to create the conditions necessary for free, fair and transparent elections in 2020. In order to

succeed, such dialogue will require the efforts of all parties and their unflagging determination to close the gap separating divergent views. The facilitator, Mr. Mkapa, is working courageously to that end with France's full support. Through dialogue, all Burundians will be able to unite and forge their common future in full independence and respect for human rights and the dignity of all.

I should like to tell the Permanent Representative of Burundi that France, the European Union, his country's other partners and neighbours in East Africa, and the entire international community stand together with him and his country to help them. France calls on the Burundian authorities to grasp this extended hand and renew peaceful relations with their international partners, as the Council has encouraged them to do in its most recent presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/7) on the subject.

The signing of the headquarters agreement with the Office of the Special Envoy and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) would send a strong message, as would the resumption of collaboration with the OHCHR team of experts, pursuant to the Human Rights Council resolution of which Burundi itself voted in favour.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we welcome the presence of President Michel Kafando and thank him for the comprehensive and enlightening briefing that he has just delivered, which was an eloquent presentation of the positive developments that have been observed in Burundi.

Following the holding of the constitutional referendum on 17 May, the current situation in Burundi is generally stable, with broad participation and almost three-quarters of the population voting in favour as solid proof of the maturity and capacity of the Government and people of Burundi to resolutely address issues of concern to the country. President Pierre Nkurunziza's statement in June that he will not present his candidature for the 2020 presidential elections, when he could run, illustrates his goodwill and demonstrates his commitment to his country. We understand that the Burundian Government is actively working to preserve national peace and stability and to promote economic and social development.

In that regard, the international community should consider the situation in Burundi in a comprehensive and objective manner, respect the independence of the country in the management of its affairs and provide constructive assistance with a view to preserving peace and development in the region, given the importance of that brotherly country to the entire region. Burundi's stability and development have a major impact throughout the Great Lakes region. Burundi, let us remember, is a troop-contributor to both United Nations and African Union peacekeeping operations, which is another sign that it is a peace-loving country.

Equatorial Guinea, as always, understands that a situation such as that in Burundi is an internal affair and must be resolved internally through a frank and inclusive political process of negotiations among Burundians. Political dialogue is the only way out of the situation in Burundi, but we warmly welcome initiatives such as the inter-Burundian dialogue under the auspices of the East African Community, the conclusions of which should undoubtedly help to restore the situation.

We believe that it is important for dialogue to resume among the Government, opposition parties and civil society on Burundian soil. That would consolidate confidence-building measures and strengthen the inter-Burundian dialogue, with the necessary presence of the facilitator, former President of Tanzania Mkapa; the official mediator, President of Uganda Yoweri Museveni; the East African Community; the African Union; and other actors that can offer positive contributions.

Equatorial Guinea has always believed in and supported the mediation work of all international, regional and subregional organizations, which in this situation are truly important to making progress in the process. We encourage the Burundian authorities to continue to work together towards achieving the goal of normalizing the situation in the country and thereby improve its relations with the international community.

In conclusion, any negotiation process must lead to fair elections in 2020, which must undoubtedly help to bring about a definitive normalization of the situation in the country.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, President Michel Kafando, for his valuable briefing at the beginning of this meeting.

We have followed with interest the political developments in the Republic of Burundi in recent

months, the most important of which is perhaps the constitutional referendum held on 17 May, with the participation of most political parties. We also welcome the current calm in Burundi at this time and we look forward to 2020, when the presidential elections will be held. It is our hope that they will be free, fair, transparent and peaceful elections. We also hope that they will be credible, include all constituents of the people of Burundi and enjoy the participation of all parties. In addition, we hope that they will be held in full respect for the freedom of expression, the freedom of the press and the participation of actors from the civil society

We commend the efforts undertaken by the African Union and the East African Community (EAC) to reach a peaceful solution in Burundi through a comprehensive dialogue based on the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, signed on 28 August 2000, and the country's Constitution. We also highly appreciate the efforts of President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Mr. Benjamin Mkapa as mediators in the process of political dialogue led by the EAC. There is no doubt that the involvement of the Burundian Government with international and regional organizations such as the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and the EAC is very important for providing the desired stability, which is one of the factors leading to a sustainable solution before the presidential elections. We are convinced that the convening of an extraordinary summit of the neighbouring States would make it possible to hold the fifth round of inter-Burundian dialogue, which will in turn facilitate the political process.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, we hope that the humanitarian conditions and the human rights situation will improve in the Republic of Burundi, as they are a source of great concern for the international community. Almost 180,000 people are internally displaced and 3.6 million need humanitarian assistance, while nearly 400,000 Burundians are refugees in neighbouring countries. In that regard, I commend the process of voluntary repatriation of more than 35,000 people following the signing of the tripartite agreement among the Government of Burundi, the Government of Tanzania and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Mr. Kafando addressed that issue during his briefing. We underscore the need to further support the undertaking of joint efforts, the reintegration of refugees into society, the provision of the necessary environment and the return of the remaining Burundians to their homes.

In conclusion, we call for accountability for those responsible for violating human rights. They must be brought to justice so that the Burundian people can enjoy security and stability in an improved humanitarian situation. It is important to ensure respect for the rule of law in Burundi in line with human rights and international humanitarian law.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, President Kafando, for his briefing.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands remains concerned about the political and security situation in Burundi, which is causing unnecessary suffering to the population. I would like to bring the following three points to the attention of the members of the Security Council: the political space for the 2020 elections, the ongoing human rights violations, and the need for continued inter-Burundian dialogue.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands has taken note of President Nkurunziza's statement on 7 June of the end of his term in 2020. That is an encouraging announcement and a step towards respecting the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. We hope that this decision will contribute to opening the political and democratic space to all political actors to prepare free, transparent and inclusive elections. We therefore call on the Burundian Government to exploit that dynamic to create, in consultation with all political movements, conditions conducive to credible elections in 2020, with the full and equal participation of women. We believe that only an inclusive dialogue involving all political actors, women and men can lead to that result.

That brings me to my second point. As long as the inter-Burundian dialogue remains at an impasse, human rights violations will continue. Credible sources have reported several cases of assassination, murder, arbitrary arrest and politically motivated kidnapping during the previous month in various parts of the country. Furthermore, we are seeing a degradation in the situation of Burundian refugees in the region, with repeated infiltrations by Government agents of refugee camps in Tanzania.

The involvement of the Imbonerakure militia and the National Intelligence Service in those actions is particularly concerning. The Government of the

Netherlands condemns these violations and urges the Burundian Government to put an end to impunity and to fully respect and guarantee the rights of all Burundians.

Given the human rights situation, investigations and independent reports are more important than ever. We therefore reiterate our call on the Government of Burundi to resume its cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to fully cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry and the three independent experts mandated by the Human Rights Council. The international community remains willing to engage in a constructive discussion of these issues with the Burundian authorities.

My third point relates to the inter-Burundian dialogue. That dialogue, held under the auspices of the East African Community, remains the designated framework for addressing the ongoing political crisis in Burundi. Discussions on modalities for the return of exiled opposition members must also be finalized as soon as possible to elaborate a road map for the 2020 electoral process. That is why we call on the East African Community to hold the next dialogue session as a matter of urgency. We also call on all parties to participate therein, without any preconditions.

Once again, we underscore that the inter-Burundian dialogue must be inclusive and abide by the principles and the spirit of the Arusha Accords. The Kingdom of the Netherlands also hails the stated commitment of the African Union to contribute, along with the East African Community, to an inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of the Netherlands maintains its commitment to development and stability for all Burundians. Nonetheless, the stakeholders in Burundi are the only ones who can re-establish a lasting peace, with the support of the region.

In his capacity as facilitator, Mr. Mkapa stated, on the margins of the African Leadership Forum, that security and peace in Burundi should be discussed by the East African Community leaders. We support them and call on them to continue their efforts, with the active support of the African Union and the continued attention of the Council, to break the political impasse.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes to thank President Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, for his excellent presentation on the sociopolitical situation in Burundi in the post-referendum period. We applaud the personal commitment of the Special Envoy to help this brotherly nation find lasting peace.

My delegation welcomes the relative improvement of the security situation in Burundi following the holding on 17 May of the constitutional referendum. That notwithstanding, at the political level Côte d'Ivoire deplores the persistent impasse in the Burundian political process more than eight months after the last session of the inter-Burundian political dialogue, held in Uganda under the auspices of the East African Community. My country urges stakeholders to resume an inclusive political dialogue and in this regard welcomes the consultations currently under way in Arusha among the Office of the facilitator, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, and United Nations and African Union teams on the holding of a closing session for the inter-Burundian dialogue and the assistance to be provided to the various bodies responsible for organizing the 2020 elections.

Côte d'Ivoire urges the Burundian authorities to take the confidence-building measures necessary to reduce sociopolitical tensions and resume an inclusive political dialogue among the Burundian people on the basis of the Arusha Accords. In this regard, my delegation takes note of the decision taken by Pierre Nkurunziza, President of Burundi, not to stand in 2020 for another term.

At the humanitarian level, despite the positive trend observed in the context of the voluntary return of Burundian refugees, my delegation remains concerned by the situation of the thousands of refugees who are awaiting better prospects for a definitive return to their country. In this context, we welcome the efforts made by the Burundian authorities, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the donor community in providing assistance and support in the context of the programme for the voluntary return of Burundian refugees to their country.

In that regard, my delegation encourages the Burundian authorities to endeavour, with the support of the international community and especially international financial institutions and bilateral partners, to improve the economic situation in the country and to create conditions conducive to the dignified and safe return of refugees and their reintegration into the socioeconomic fabric of the country.

To conclude, Côte d'Ivoire calls on the international community to further support the initiatives of the East African Community and of the mediator and

the facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue, with a view to the effective resumption of the talks in order to achieve national reconciliation and lasting stability in Burundi.

Côte d'Ivoire, my country, strongly supports the Special Envoy's call on the authorities with regard to the early signing of an agreement on and the opening of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy in Bujumbura. Côte d'Ivoire expresses its support to the Special Envoy, Mr. Kafando, and reiterates to him its willingness to support all of his efforts in the context of the inter-Burundian political dialogue.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank Special Envoy Michel Kafando for his briefing on the current political situation in Burundi. We are very much encouraged by the continued stable security situation in that country, even after the 17 May constitutional referendum. It is also encouraging that the results of the referendum were largely accepted by stakeholders and grievances handled through established legal mechanisms.

We believe that the statement made on 7 June by His Excellency Pierre Nkurunziza, President of Burundi, not to stand for the presidential elections in 2020 is a positive gesture towards the settlement of the political impasse in the country. As we have repeatedly stated, the political impasse in the country can be addressed only through peaceful, inclusive and consensual dialogue. The lack of progress in this regard in the mediation led by the East African Community (EAC) has been a matter of concern. Hence the relaunching of a genuine and inclusive dialogue under the auspices of the EAC and with the support of the African Union and the United Nations, on the basis of the spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement and the Constitution of Burundi, is all the more urgent so as to ensure lasting peace and stability in, as well as a better future for, Burundi.

In the light of the calm security situation and the subsequent progress registered in the country, we believe that the engagement between the international community and the Government of Burundi must be based on a realistic strategy aimed at supporting strong institutions and creating a conducive climate in which gains are consolidated and the remaining political differences addressed, without backsliding into the violence seen in the past.

In this regard, the Council should explore new avenues for re-engagement with Burundi. Alleviating the socioeconomic difficulties of the population and addressing the humanitarian situation, inter alia, should be seen as an integral part of such re-engagement. On the side of the Government of Burundi, too, we believe that it is important to have an open-minded engagement with the international community in explaining the plan for the election to be held in 2020, as well as the commitment to the spirit of the Arusha Agreement.

Finally, we call for the Government to fully cooperate with the three human rights experts mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 36/2, which was presented in Geneva on 28 September 2017 by African countries, including Burundi, in gathering the information so that it could garner the necessary assistance to address the capacity gap critically needed in this area.

Mr. Vaverka (Sweden): I would like to join others in welcoming Special Envoy Kafando back to the Chamber today and to thank him for his update this morning. While welcoming the positive developments that the Special Envoy has reported on, we must not underestimate the frailty of the security situation in Burundi and the precarious nature of the political, economic and humanitarian situation, as well as continued reported grave human rights violations. There is clearly a need for the Security Council's continued engagement and support, especially for regional mediation efforts.

The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement continues to be the fundament for peace, security and stability for Burundi and the region. An inclusive political resolution of the current conflict through dialogue must be found. Sweden fully supports the efforts led by the East African Community to revitalize an inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue. We expect the Government and all relevant actors to commit fully to this process. In order to stabilize the political, security and human rights situation, there needs to be a conclusion of this dialogue.

A consensus-based road map towards free, fair and inclusive elections in 2020 is important. It is crucial that the United Nations and the international community follow and support the process. I would also like to firmly underscore that ensuring women's full and equal participation is essential for credible elections. The announcement by President Nkurunziza that he will not seek another term in 2020 was an important step towards a constructive political process.

We reiterate our full support for the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission's Burundi configuration, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Lauber. The Commission remains a unique platform for discussing the situation in the country with Burundi and brings a holistic understanding of the socioeconomic situation and the urgent peacebuilding needs.

Finally, we are deeply concerned about the continued lack of progress in addressing human rights violations and abuses in Burundi. Upholding and respecting human rights and ensuring accountability is critical for trust, dialogue and human dignity and to prevent further escalation of the conflict. It is thus of great importance that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights be allowed to work in the country and enjoy our full support in this regard.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank President Kafando for his briefing today.

The United States welcomes President Nkurunziza's announcement in June that he does not intend to seek a fourth term. The act of stepping down of his own accord would be a strong step forward for Burundi and democracy, and would set a positive example for other leaders in the region. Such a step would also reaffirm the promise he made to the Burundian people in 2015. As we welcome this positive step, we also call on the Government of Burundi to improve respect for human rights, civic space, media freedom and overall governance so as to allow all Burundians to participate in their Government.

We are concerned that the Government of Burundi has still not agreed to a resumption of cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and has denied access to the country by the commission of inquiry mandated by the Human Rights Council. We remain deeply concerned about continuing human rights violations and abuses, including excessive restrictions on civic and political space in Burundi, media restrictions, arbitrary arrests and unduly harsh sentences for human rights defenders. We look to the Government of Burundi to take clear steps to end violence and reopen the political space for members of the opposition, independent media and civil society, and to engage in inclusive dialogue with Burundian political stakeholders.

We also urge the Government of Burundi to ensure that opposition political actors, including those currently acting as independents, are fully able to participate in future elections. We encourage opposition political actors to commit to participating in elections in 2020 and to take concrete and realistic steps to ensure that they are able to do so. We must also insist that all parties, including the Government and opposition members, categorically reject violence as a political tool. These measures will be essential to peaceful, free, fair and open political competition ahead of the elections scheduled for 2020.

We also welcome efforts by the region to convene the next round of the inter-Burundian dialogue, led by the East African Community, in September. The sustained support of the region will be required to produce a durable political solution that lays the groundwork for peaceful, free, fair and inclusive elections in 2020. However, we reiterate that good-faith engagement from both the Burundi Government and opposition members is necessary for a successful dialogue.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, President Kafando, for his insightful briefing.

Kazakhstan reiterates the importance of implementing the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement and of establishing meaningful inter-Burundian dialogue. Those, we can say, are the most important and the only viable instruments for a peaceful resolution of the political situation in Burundi. We therefore call on all parties to engage in direct and constructive cooperation with the aim of holding the next round of the dialogue.

We commend the decision of the President of Burundi, Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, not to run for another term, thereby helping to ease the political strain. This measure will certainly assist in sustaining peace, security and democracy in the country. We express hope that the forthcoming presidential elections in 2020 will be held in a peaceful, free, fair, transparent and inclusive manner, with the participation and broad consensus of all stakeholders. Only such an approach would ensure durable peace, and it should be supported by the international community.

We also emphasize the importance of respecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens, and reaffirm the primary responsibility of the Burundi Government for providing security, thereby protecting its population. We further stress the importance of the committed efforts of the African Union and the East African Community in revitalizing the political process

in Burundi. We particularly support the activities of the facilitator, former President Benjamin Mkapa, and the mediator, President Museveni.

The work of the joint technical working group is also crucial in promoting confidence-building measures. We encourage the regional and subregional organizations and the guarantors of the Arusha Agreement to redouble their efforts and contribute to finding a political solution to the current situation in country. That nationally owned process should be undertaken with respect for the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity and unity of Burundi.

At the same time, while the security situation in Burundi is generally calm, a large number of internally displaced persons and thousands of refugees are in need of assistance. This issue needs to be continuously addressed by the Council, the United Nations and bilateral and multilateral partners, as well as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other international institutions. Such collective effort is needed for the development work that must be rigorously undertaken.

We also commend the regional host countries for their assistance and reiterate that the repatriation of refugees must be voluntary and in accordance with the principles of respect and dignity, as enshrined in international and human rights law. The close coordination between the United Nations, the African Union and subregional structures would have a significant impact on the political and humanitarian dimensions.

Finally, we commend the determined efforts of the Special Envoy and the United Nations system to achieve peace, security and long-term stability. We also acknowledge the significant role of the Peacebuilding Commission's Burundi configuration as a platform for the Burundi authorities to address existing economic challenges, for which the support of international partners is critical.

Mr. Lie Cheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We listened carefully to the briefing by Mr. Kafando in his capacity as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi. We hope that the Special Envoy will continue to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with the Government of Burundi.

The current situation in Burundi is generally stable. The Burundian Government has worked actively to preserve national peace and stability and to promote economic and social development. It has formulated a national development plan and cooperated with neighbouring countries to facilitate the voluntary return of Burundian refugees. China welcomes those positive developments. Burundi is an important country in the Great Lakes region of Africa. The stability and development of Burundi contribute to peace and stability in the region. The international community should fully recognize the efforts of the Burundian Government in maintaining peace and stability and should actively provide constructive assistance to the Government and the people of Burundi to meet their needs. China would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, there must be proper respect for Burundi's national ownership, sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. The international community should consider the current situation in Burundi comprehensively and objectively and should play a constructive role with a view to ensuring the long-term stability and development of the country and the region.

Secondly, there must be continued support for Burundi's political process. China appreciates the positive efforts by regional and subregional organizations such as the African Union, the East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in exercising their good offices with regard to the issue of Burundi. We support the EAC in taking the lead in that regard.

Thirdly, our priority should be to increase humanitarian assistance to Burundi and to support its economic and social development. China welcomes the Burundian Government's recent active cooperation with neighbouring countries in their response to refugees and other humanitarian issues. China urges the relevant international agencies and organizations to resume economic cooperation with and development assistance to Burundi as soon as possible.

The Chinese Government supports the Burundi peace process and has actively provided assistance for the country's nation-building. China is ready to continue to play a constructive role in achieving stability and development in Burundi.

Mr. Mielus (Poland): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Envoy Michel Kafando for his briefing.

Noting the adoption of the new Constitution through a referendum on 17 May, as well as the concerns about

the compatibility of some of its provisions with the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, Poland welcomes the announcement by President Nkurunziza that he does not intend to seek a fourth term in 2020, thereby reaffirming the promise that he made to the Burundian people in 2015.

At the same time, we are concerned over the political situation in the country and the slow progress of the intra-Burundian dialogue. Poland believes that the President's announcement will need to be followed by tangible steps to achieve political reconciliation. It is the role of the authorities to ensure that the electoral process in 2020 is free, fair, transparent and truly inclusive, with the participation of all political parties and the equal participation of women.

We recognize the Arusha Peace Agreement and its provisions with regard to the need for a broad political consensus and preventing the concentration of power in a single institution or unit as the main instrument for peace and stability in Burundi and in the whole region. The intra-Burundian dialogue needs to be continued with the active participation of all Burundian stakeholders, since only an inclusive political dialogue can ensure a sustainable and widely acceptable solution.

In that context, Poland would like to emphasize the special role of the leaders of neighbouring countries and the guarantors of the Arusha Agreement in order to overcome the causes that are generating instability in the region. We welcome the commitment of the African Union and the East African Community (EAC) to a peaceful resolution of the political situation in Burundi and affirm our support for the facilitation led by the EAC representative, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa.

Poland remains seriously concerned over the human rights situation in the country. We are worried about the reported intimidation of members of the opposition as well as the limitations on political space, an independent media and civil society. We strongly condemn all violations and abuses in that regard by whomsoever. Poland calls for the authorities to restore effective cooperation with international institutions in that regard. We urge the Government of Burundi to take transparent steps to improve governance and respect for human rights, to open up the public and democratic space and to ensure the freedom of the media ahead of the elections in 2020.

The situation in Burundi must be seen in the broader regional context of the Great Lakes region. It threatens to exacerbate the humanitarian and refugee crisis in Burundi and in its neighbourhood.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the fact that the Arusha Agreement gives hope not only to Burundi but also to the entire region. It is now urgent to return to the spirit of that Agreement and to preserve the country as an inclusive and safe home for all its people.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this meeting and the briefing by Mr. Michel Kafando.

We take note of some positive developments since the referendum, such as the decrease in violence and the announcement by President Pierre Nkurunziza that he will not stand in the 2020 elections. However, we note with concern that there continues to be a climate of instability, confrontation and a lack of dialogue, as well as ongoing reports of human rights violations and restrictions on the fundamental freedoms of expression, association and the press. The Government's action, or rather inaction, in the area of human rights and the actions of associated groups such as the Imbonerakure are of particular concern. We therefore believe that the Security Council must remain attentive to the developments in the country with a view to promoting the peace and stability required to overcome the humanitarian crisis and to address the root causes of the conflict.

In that regard, we stress the need for the country to remain committed to implementing the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, as well as to upholding the delicate balance that it has established among the Burundian communities since the civil war. To that end, we believe that it is vital to restore and to move forward in the intra-Burundian dialogue facilitated by the East African Community. We hope that it can become the inclusive and representative mechanism necessary to overcome the political crisis and to improve the security situation in the country. We also believe that the difficult situation suffered by the almost 400,000 Burundian refugees in neighbouring countries, in particular women and children, must be urgently addressed.

On the other hand, we believe that it is essential to promote accountability for human rights violations committed in the country and to build the necessary institutional framework for that purpose. It is important that the Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights decide

on and agree the memorandum of understanding so that they can resume their activities on the ground.

Finally, we would like to highlight the important role of regional organizations and neighbouring countries in support of stability in the country. Breaking the vicious cycle of conflict and poverty is the main task of the Burundian people, but it also requires the support of the international community.

Mr. Repkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Michel Kafando for his briefing on the developing situation in the country. We regret that, unfortunately, today the Security Council could not listen to the Permanent Representative of Switzerland, Mr. Jürg Lauber, Chair of the country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), which remains a channel for reliable communication with Bujumbura. We support the PBC's efforts to revitalize cooperation with the Burundians by discussing issues related to the socioeconomic development of the country and by re-establishing donor confidence.

We continue to receive information from Russian colleagues — our diplomats in Bujumbura — according to which the situation in the country remains generally calm. The genuine security situation in Burundi is evidenced by the fact that the country continues active inter-parliamentary contacts. Opposition politicians as well as refugees are continuing to return to Burundi. The Government has released more than 2,000 political prisoners in the framework of the ongoing national reconciliation process.

In evaluating the political situation in Burundi, we would like to point to the peaceful atmosphere in which the constitutional referendum was held on 17 May. We note the impressive, virtually unprecedented voter turnout for an African country, and the support expressed for the constitutional changes by a large majority of those who voted, as well as the fact that this expression of the people's will was preceded by a democratic and transparent propaganda campaign. It is also important that the country's new Constitution, adopted on 7 June, retains all the elements of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, including those concerning ethnic quotas in Burundi's governing institutions. We want to point out that the current President of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza, has declared his willingness to support his successor when his second presidential term ends in 2020.

In that regard, we are not in full agreement with the alarmist assessments of the internal political situation in Burundi voiced by a number of our colleagues today. They are clearly not taking into account the country's positive momentum, which is a very good reason for taking it off the Security Council's overloaded agenda. We get the impression that instead of trying to improve our collaborative efforts, our colleagues are openly playing up to the radical Burundian opposition. We proceed from a belief in the impermissibility of outside interference in Burundi's internal political processes, and we are opposed to mentoring and the imposition of off-the-shelf recipes on sovereign States for solving complex socioeconomic and political problems.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Michel Kafando, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, for his briefing.

Bolivia is pleased that the referendum on 17 May was held in a calm atmosphere with no major incidents and in an inclusive manner, with all political parties participating. We also believe that the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement should continue to be the cornerstone of this process. We reiterate that an inclusive dialogue and respect for the Agreement constitute a firm foundation for dealing with the country's crisis. In that regard, we noted the fact that some important aims of the Agreement on national reconciliation, democratic principles, social cohesion, the distribution of power, women's participation in politics, sovereignty and the rule of law and regional integration have been incorporated into the new Constitution. We encourage Burundi to continue working to create conditions conducive to a peaceful environment and a climate of trust for the next elections, scheduled for 2020, by strengthening a spirit of tolerance, taking conciliatory measures and resuming a dialogue with the opposition.

Bolivia appreciates and supports the Special Envoy's efforts to see the inter-Burundian dialogue continue in an atmosphere of inclusion. We appreciate the facilitation efforts led by the former President of Tanzania Benjamin Mkapa and the current President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, in accordance with the Arusha Agreement. In that regard, we believe that the road map proposed by Mr. Mkapa should be implemented in order to reach a consensus. We are also grateful for the efforts of the East African Community (EAC), the African Union Special Representative in Burundi, the Chair of the Burundi configuration of

the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations country team. We encourage them to continue their good offices and to work to coordinate their efforts in order to improve their cooperation and continue to support the EAC-led mediation, which should remain at the head of the process.

Burundi's contribution to peace and security through its deployment of troops should also be taken into account, since it is a demonstration of its institutional capacity. The international community should support Burundi in building its capacities, which are closely linked to its socioeconomic development and continuing humanitarian challenges. We encourage the international community to continue providing financing for the humanitarian response programme in Burundi. We want to highlight the fact that more than 35,000 refugees have voluntarily returned and urge the Government to continue to prepare for the voluntary return of the hundreds of thousands of others who are still in neighbouring countries. In order to overcome these challenges, it is essential to establish an atmosphere of trust, which will involve lifting any unilateral sanctions, in accordance with the call by the Heads of State at the July Summit of the African Union. Such sanctions have damaging consequences for the lives of groups in vulnerable situations and a negative impact on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Lastly, the Security Council, and the international community in general, should give constructive support to the dialogue and take action in areas where there is still a lack of convergence, in the interests of a peaceful settlement based on respect for Burundi's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

I would like to thank Special Envoy Kafando for his briefing. I also agree with my Russian colleague on the value of the Peacebuilding Commission and the work of Ambassador Lauber, who is unfortunately on vacation right now. It is really important that we bring all elements of the abilities and capabilities of the United Nations to bear in these situations.

The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement brought peace to Burundi after more than a decade of civil war and hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths. It is crucial for Burundi's long-term stability that the spirit and the letter of the accords be preserved. We welcome President Nkurunziza's announcement that he will step down at the end of his current term. It was an important step and an important message for the people of Burundi, the region and the international community. A genuine, inclusive dialogue with all parties remains the only viable option for resolving the political situation, and so, as Mr. Kafando made clear, progress on the inter-Burundian dialogue led by the East African Community remains crucial to the future peace and security of both Burundi and the region. We echo his call for the parties to engage openly and constructively, and urge the region and subregion to remain fully engaged in order to ensure that swift progress is made during the coming months and weeks.

The human rights situation in Burundi is deeply worrying. The United Kingdom urges the Government of Burundi to take steps to make rapid progress in improving the situation so that the country is better prepared to move towards elections in 2020. First, it should signal its commitment to upholding human rights by completing its negotiations on a memorandum of understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in order to enable OHCHR to operate effectively in Burundi. Secondly, the Government should implement Human Rights Council resolution 36/2, endorsed by the Group of African States, including Burundi, and adopted at the thirty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council in September 2017. We urge the Government to engage with OHCHR to facilitate the return of the human rights experts whose visas were revoked in April.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Shingiro (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time I am taking the floor under the United Kingdom presidency, I would first like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August. Knowing your experience and your team's proven professionalism and dynamism, we have no doubt that your presidency will be a successful one, and you can count on Burundi's cooperation throughout your tenure. I would also like convey through you my thanks to all the members of the Security Council, who since 2015 have always supported the sovereignty and political independence of Burundi and respected the

principles of the Charter of the United Nations during their consultations on Burundi.

I thank all the delegations that spoke this morning, but we regret that a small number among them remain wedded to the narrative of 2015 and fail to note positive developments in Burundi that have led to the positive situation referred to by the Special Envoy, who enjoys the support of everyone here. The tendency to diametrically oppose the position held by the Special Envoy and the majority of States Members and disregard developments of the situation on the ground, while adhering to the 2015 narrative, is not a constructive approach, and it should change.

I warmly welcome the presence of Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, this morning. I cannot thank him enough for his briefing.

The purpose of my statement this morning is to share with members of the Security Council new developments in Burundi since previous briefing on the situation in my country, on 24 May (see S/PV.8268).

As one can see, the security situation in Burundi has remained calm, stable and fully under control. The return to normalcy in the country has allowed, inter alia, the holding of the constitutional referendum, which took place without major incident, the large-scale return of refugees and the hosting of several conferences at the regional and continental levels, as well as the welcoming of foreign dignitaries visiting Burundi. The visit of the Chairperson of the African Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union took place just this past week. At the conclusion of his visit and after having travelled to six provinces within the country, the Chairperson issued a statement in which he declared that he had found Burundi to be a calm and stable country. He was impressed by the evident will of the Burundian political class to turn over a new leaf vis-à-vis 2015, in order to work towards the holding of free, transparent and peaceful elections in 2020.

With regard to the political situation, the Council will recall that, upon the promulgation of Burundi's new Constitution on 7 June, the President of the Republic informed Burundians and the international community that his second term of office would end in 2020 and that he would support the new President to be elected the same year. Contrary to the statements of some — as you will recall, Mr. President — who had attributed to him the intention to fashion the new Constitution to his own ends so as to remain in power until 2034, the President's gesture was of great political and democratic significance and strengthened democratic processes in the region and on the African continent. His gesture should be encouraged and welcomed. I thank all the delegations that commended that action, which was extremely important not only for Burundi but also for the subregion.

Furthermore, with regard to the political sphere, it would not be an overstatement to say that the spirit of tolerance and the process clearing the way for and opening Burundian political space are becoming increasingly strengthened. That has been reflected in the return and reintegration of several thousand refugees, as well as several political leaders who had fled the country, including former President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya and former Vice-President Alice Nzomukanda, as well as several former Burundian parliamentarians. Those politicians who returned to their country are freely enjoying their civil and political rights today. The release of more than 2,000 prisoners in early 2018 is also part of that dynamic of reconciliation, social cohesion and political tolerance under way in the country.

With regard to the inter-Burundian dialogue, my delegation recalls that, as a means of finding peaceful solutions to political disputes, dialogue has become a way of life in our country. Those asking us to promote dialogue today are pushing on an open door. Besides the commendable efforts of the East African Community, Burundi enjoys a Political Party Forum, which is an excellent platform for promoting dialogue among authorized political parties in Burundi. Within that context, all political parties met in Kayanza, in the north of Burundi, on 3 August to discuss informally significant issues concerning the 2020 elections. That meeting resulted in the adoption of a road map by more than 20 political parties with a view towards free, inclusive and peaceful elections in 2020.

With regard to regional dynamics, they remain on course. Contacts at the highest level have continued since the Council's latest meeting on the subject. This past week, His Excellency the President of Uganda, the chief mediator of the inter-Burundian dialogue, granted an audience to the first Vice-President of Burundi, who conveyed a special message from His Excellency President Nkurunziza to his Ugandan counterpart. Similarly, early this week, His Excellency the President of the United Republic of Tanzania also

received in audience the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burundi, who also carried a special message from the President of the Republic of Burundi to his Tanzanian counterpart — all of which is an indication that regional political dynamics are healthy despite what has been said in this Chamber.

With regard to the return of refugees, I am pleased to inform the Council that, to date, since 2016, more than 206,000 refugees have voluntarily returned to Burundi. That number includes 100,000 refugees, who decided to return in 2016; 168,000 who returned to their families from January to August 2017; and another 38,254 who have returned to the country since the tripartite agreement of August 2017 among the Governments of Burundi, Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The voluntary return of refugees is continuing at a satisfactory pace.

My delegation nevertheless reiterates its request to UNHCR and our friends in the region to work with certain host countries holding our compatriots hostage in exile by erecting artificial barriers towards their voluntary return to Burundi and towards ensuring that the refugee camps maintain their civilian character in accordance with the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and resolution 2389 (2017), on the Great Lakes Region, adopted on 8 December 2017.

With regard to human rights, Burundi once again reiterates its readiness to work and cooperate with other nations and the United Nations to promote the protection of human rights in Burundi and elsewhere throughout the world. That noble mission will be made possible only through stepped-up cooperation and frank dialogue among Member States. In that context, Burundi continues to cooperate in implementing the resolution adopted by the Group of African States on 28 September 2017 in Geneva within the framework of cooperation and capacity-building. Burundi is awaiting official notification from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the appointment of three experts in transparency and due process. What has been said about Burundi's so-called lack of cooperation in the implementation of that resolution, which we own as our own, as we supported it, is owing to misinformation and a lack of transparency. The same can be said concerning the memorandum of understanding on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Burundi. Burundi remains very open to pursuing discussions in a constructive spirit.

With regard to the economic sanctions that European Union partners imposed upon Burundi following the unrest caused by the 2015 elections, my delegation would like to inform the members of the Council that the context in which those sanctions were imposed has fundamentally changed. The electoral tensions of 2015 are no more. For us, they are a page in history that will serve as a lesson to irreversibly reconcile our country. I also recall that, following the undisputed return of peace and security in our country, the African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government held in early July in Mauritania adopted a resolution demanding the European Union to lift the unjust and immoral sanctions weighing heavily on Burundi, which are, as members know, contrary to the principles of Charter of the United Nations and negatively affect vulnerable groups like women and children.

Concerning cooperation with the United Nations, Burundi is proud to participate actively and outstandingly in United Nations and African Union peacekeeping missions. More than 6,000 Burundian men and women have been deployed in various peacekeeping operations throughout the world, especially in the Central African Republic and Somalia. The excellent work of our brave soldiers on a peace mission, who have voluntarily chosen to sacrifice their lives by saving those of others, far from their native land and in particularly difficult conditions, must be appreciated and recognized at its true value.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its strong appeal to the Security Council to have the courage to remove Burundi from its agenda. It is worth noting that the current political and security situation in the country is calm, stable and completely under control. It is far from posing a threat to international peace and security, which is the Council's area of competence. No objective argument can justify the holding of untimely meetings on Burundi at this juncture.

My delegation draws particular attention to the fact that the organization of a spate of meetings on Burundi that are not motivated by the reality on the ground could become a factor of destabilization for the country, instead of promoting the peace and stability sought by all, and could monopolize regional efforts. This fury against Burundi, a country whose return to normalcy is well established, should cease; if it does not, history will remember that our country was kept on the Council's agenda unjustly in order to meet non-Burundian and non-African interests. The valuable time that Council

allocates to Burundi should be devoted to other areas of tension and conflict, which are legion at the moment, as we all know. The place that Burundi deserves today is not in this Chamber; it should be within the United Nations agencies in charge of socioeconomic development to boost its economic recovery.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.